Every American who has been moved by the universal philosophy of nonviolence, every American whose life was transformed by the civil rights movement, owes a debt to India. Today I had the great honor of visiting the Gandhi Memorial. Two weeks ago, in my own country, I visited Selma, Alabama, which is one of the sacred sites of our civil rights movement, where the words of Martin Luther King and the marches of ordinary citizens both echoed the ideas of Gandhi.

My country has been enriched by the contributions of more than a million Indian-Americans, from Vinod Dahm, the father of the Pentium chip, to Deepak Chopra, pioneer of alternative medicine, to Sabeer Bhatia, creator of the free-mail system Hotmail, the free E-mail system.

Now, next Sunday when the Academy Awards are given out in Los Angeles, more than a few people, not only in India but in America, will be rooting for director M. Night Shyamalan and his remarkable movie "The Sixth Sense," nominated for best picture.

So we have gotten a lot from India, and we have neglected our friendship for too long. Today we are proud to be your partners, your allies, your friends in freedom.

As a President who has the good fortune to have been selected by an electorate that casts about 100 million votes, I can hardly imagine a nation with over 600 million eligible voters. I don't know how you please them all. Or should I say, 60 *crore*.

I didn't know what a *crore* was until I got here this time. Now I can go home and suggest to my Vice President that he have a new slogan: Four *crore* for Al Gore! [*Laughter*]

We have a lot to give the world in the richness of democracy. One of the great things about a democracy is, it is a system which allows us to resolve our differences through conversation, not confrontation. I've enjoyed the conversation that we began here today. I am grateful that we found common ground. I am convinced we have laid the foundation for a new respectful partnership based on our oldest and most enduring values.

In the days to come, may our two nations always remain examples of tolerance and the power of diversity. May we build societies that draw upon the talents and energies of all our people. May we preserve the beauty and natural richness of this small planet that we share. May we work together to make the difficult choices and the necessary investments, as Nehru once instructed, "to advance the larger cause of humanity." In the spirit of that partnership and that vision, I ask you all to join me in raising a glass to the President, the Prime Minister, and the people of this wonderful nation which has welcomed us.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 p.m. in the Banquet Hall at Rashtrapati Bhavan. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Narayanan.

Interview With Peter Jennings of ABC's "World News Tonight" in New Delhi

March 21, 2000

India-Pakistan Dispute Over Kashmir

Mr. Jennings. Prime Minister Vajpayee said that you will conclude, now that you're here, that the situation—Kashmir, between India and Pakistan—is not as bad as they say it is. Is that what you conclude?

The President. Well, I think that I've concluded that he is going to do everything he can to avoid having it escalate into a war with Pakistan. And that is encouraging. But I still think it's a difficult situation, to say the least. I think it's important that they both show restraint. I think it's important that they respect the Line of Control, both sides do. And then, over the long run, I think what really matters, in terms of an ultimate resolution, is that the people of Kashmir feel that their legitimate interests are being addressed in some formal fashion.

But I do feel better about his determination to avoid a war, at least what you might call a full-scale war. But I don't—I'm still very troubled by the fact there's so much violence there. A lot of it obviously is propagated beyond the borders of Kashmir, and I don't think the Line of Control is adequately respected.

And I think—you know, what happened at Kargil was very troubling to me, because I supported strongly the dialog between India and Pakistan in the Lahore process. I still think it's a difficult situation, and I don't think they should take it lightly, either side.

Mr. Jennings. Moreover, Prime Minister Vajpayee is much more militant with the Indian press than he was with you today.

The President. That's good, though. That means that—maybe that means my trip here has a beneficial impact. And I hope I can have some impact on the Pakistanis when I go there.

Mr. Jennings. What do you mean by "impact," Mr. President?

The President. You know, I spent last July 4th trying to persuade former Prime Minister Sharif to withdraw back behind the Line of Control. He did. I think it weakened him when he did, frankly, but it was the right thing to do.

I think that they—these countries need to be thinking about reducing violence and increasing cooperation and dialog and freeing up their immensely talented people for different pursuits. If you look at how well the Indians and the Pakistani-Americans have done, how well they're doing in the information economy in the United States, how well they're beginning to do here, it's truly a tragedy that they're basically trapped in this position which, even if it doesn't lead to war, leads to big expenses on defense, which could be spent on education and health care or the development of a modern economy.

So I hope that my trip here and the long-term rekindling of the relationship with India that I'm committed to for our country can basically, slowly, over time, take this in a different direction.

Mr. Jennings. Forgive me for being more pointed. You know as well as I do that you're talking, to a very large extent, in generalities. What do you think the United States can really do here, especially given the fact that the Indians say the United States has no role?

The President. Well, I think that what they say is that we have no role in Kashmir. And they have every right to say that. Every place in the world I've been involved in the peace process—you know, it's because we have been able to inspire the confidence and have a relationship with both parties.

But I think the United States does have an interest in trying to avert a larger conflict and trying to reduce the tensions between the two countries. I think we do have a clear interest there.

Mr. Jennings. So?

The President. We've worked with the Pakistanis for years. We want it—and obviously we've got a big interest in India's future. So therefore, I think anything I can do to get them to focus on what it would take to reduce the tensions is important. And I think right now the important thing is respecting the Line of Control, reducing violence, and find a way to resume the dialog. Now, beyond that, it's up to them.

Mr. Jennings. You'll tell the Pakistanis they should respect the Line of Control, the de facto cease-fire line?

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Jennings. And what will you tell those Kashmiris, or Pakistanis, who believe they're fighting to free the Muslim Kashmiris from Indian control?

The President. First of all, I think that—the same thing I said to the Indians. I don't think there can be a military solution to Kashmir. And the tangled history of it does not admit of a simple solution. I think that the best chance that the Pakistanis have, if they want to have a positive impact on what they believe the legitimate concerns of people who live in that part of Kashmir that's in India, is through a dialog, not through acts of violence and supporting acts of violence.

And I think for many years they thought that might get us involved, and it won't. I'm not going to be dragged into something that—first of all, that India doesn't want us to be part of and, secondly, that I got dragged into from deliberate acts of violence. I just don't think that's right.

Mr. Jennings. So what is America's Kashmir policy?

The President. Our policy is: First, respect the Line of Control; second, do not promote violence by third parties in Kashmir; third, negotiate; and fourth, with respect to India, that

there's not a military solution to Kashmir's problems by India, either, that the Kashmiris deserve to have their own concerns addressed on the merits. But I don't think we ought to get in the position of saying that we think that an ethnically diverse country like India can't exist anymore. I don't agree with that.

Mr. Jennings. Do you support the Kashmiris' right to a referendum on their own independence? Do you support the right as it was laid out by the United Nations in 1948, for them to have a plebiscite on their future?

The President. Well, there's been a lot of changes since 1948, including what happened in 1971 and a number of things since. What I support is—I support some process by which the Kashmiris' legitimate grievances are addressed, and I support respecting the Line of Control. And I think the Pakistanis and the Indians have to have some way of talking about it. And the Indians have to have some way of talking to their own Kashmiris about it that recognizes there's not a military solution.

But the most I can do right now is to oppose violence, particularly oppose violence propagated by third parties within Kashmir, and to support reaffirming the Line of Control. And Prime Minister Vajpayee just said today that if the Pakistanis would reaffirm the principles of the Lahore Declaration and not promote or support violence on the other side of the Line of Control and respect the Line of Control, that he thought a dialog could be resumed. I think that is the best hope, ultimately, for resolving this.

Mr. Jennings. Who are these third parties you're referring to, involved in Kashmir?

The President. Well, we know that there have been instances of violence within Kashmir that were propagated by people who were not from there, but they weren't necessarily elements of the Pakistani Government. I don't want to accuse Pakistan of something it didn't do.

Mr. Jennings. Do you believe the Pakistan Intelligence Service facilitates the infiltration of fighters to Kashmir?

The President. I believe that there are elements within the Pakistani Government that have supported those who engaged in violence in Kashmir.

Mr. Jennings. And what will you tell General Musharraf about that?

The President. Just exactly what I said to you. And I want to talk with him, as I did with Prime Minister Vajpayee, about the future. I think that in order to get out of a fix—when you get into a fix like this and you feel paralyzed by your past practices, the only way to change it is to have a vision of the future which convinces you that if you want to achieve a certain goal, you've got to do it in a different way. And I'll do my best to persuade him of that.

I just don't think that this is the way to deal with Kashmir, and I don't think it's a good enough reason to drive, in effect, the whole existence, the whole policy of the Pakistani Government. The Pakistanis are great people, too. They've been good allies of ours. They've helped us even in my time, since the end of the cold war, to get terrorists, the terrorists involved—one involved in the World Trade Center, one involved in the CIA killing. They've helped us in other contexts. I want to continue to be a good ally for them. But I think they have to have a plan for restoring democracy, and they have to have a nonviolent plan for resolving their differences with India.

Mr. Jennings. Just so I understand, then, Mr. President, you want the United States on the sidelines in this, giving advice but not involved in any three-way attempt to settle the Kashmir issue?

The President. I don't think the United States can be involved in a three-way attempt to settle the Kashmir issue, unless and until they both want us. I think that that is the evidence—you know, if you look at, we're in the Middle East because they both want us, not to say that either side agrees with everything I say and do, but we have a certain credibility there born of years and years and years of labor and a welcoming into the process. The same thing is true in the Irish peace process.

So I think that right now what I need to do is to try to convince both sides to avoid the worst—and there's something to be said for avoiding the worst here—and then to adopt some common principles which will allow the resumption of the dialog. If we can get them to renounce violence as a way of resolving this and to restore their dialog, respect the Line of Control so the dialog can be restored, then who knows what will happen and what they decide to do and how they decide to do it. But if they stay sort of hunkered down in unapproachable positions, then I think we'll have to work very hard to avoid a more difficult situation.

Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia

Mr. Jennings. I have a nuclear question. The United States tells people in the rest of the world to be like us. And the Indians say, "Right. We're just like you. We're a democracy. We're a free-market economy, and we have nuclear weapons in order to protect our national security." What's wrong with that?

The President. Well, what's wrong with it is that we're trying to lead the world away from nuclear power and away from the threat of nuclear war. And when the Indians took this position, they basically said, "We don't think we can be secure without nuclear weapons, and it's our right as a great nation to have them."

And we, first of all, don't believe it does; we don't believe it enhances their security. We think countries like Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, South Korea, that walked away from the prospect of nuclear programs, are more secure and have more funds to support their own national security and the development of their people and their economy. And we believe that it sends a bad signal when a great democracy like India, in effect, is telling the world that we ought to get into another arms race.

I've tried to reduce the arms of the United States. I hope this year we'll make another effort to reduce the arms of the United States and the arms of Russia. I've tried to support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the restriction of the distribution of fissile material.

So I think India—it sounds great to say, "Well, the United States has nuclear weapons, and they're a democracy. We ought to." But if you look at the whole history of this thing, what they're saying is, "We want to reverse the move toward reducing the nuclear threat because we say we ought to have nuclear weapons."

Mr. Jennings. Well, they also say, sir, that these are weapons of self-esteem and this is a U.S.——

The President. Self-esteem, that's right. If they're weapons of self-esteem for India, then every nation in the entire world has the same right to self-esteem. So therefore, however many countries there are in the world, everyone that can afford one ought to have a nuclear weapon. I do not believe that that would make the world safer. I believe that that would make the world more dangerous.

So I respect what the Indians say. They say, "Look, it's not just Pakistan. China has nuclear weapons. You know, it wasn't so many decades ago we had a border war with China. We have our problems there." But I think that most people believe—and have studied this believe that all nations would be more secure if we reduce the overall nuclear threat and reduce the number of people that had access to nuclear weapons.

And also keep in mind, the more nuclear weapons you have, the more nuclear material you have, the more risk you have that that nuclear material will be subject to pilfering. So you have to worry about—not only about other states becoming nuclear states but even terrorists getting ahold of small-scale nuclear weapons. I just think that it takes the world in the wrong direction. It's an honest disagreement we have with the Indians.

Mr. Jennings. Yes, because the Indians say to you, "You Americans say well, you just don't trust us"——

The President. That's not true.

Mr. Jennings. ——"It's okay for you, but you don't trust us."

The President. No, that's not true. Actually, I do trust them. I believe Prime Minister Vajpayee when he says, "I will never be the first to use nuclear weapons." So it's not a question of trust.

What I don't agree with is that a country needs nuclear weapons to manifest its esteem or its national greatness. Nor do I agree that India is actually more secure with these nuclear weapons. I think that in some ways it reduces one's security.

Mr. Jennings. Trust the Pakistanis with control of nuclear weapons, too?

The President. I feel the same way about them. I think—they probably think they have a better argument since they know they couldn't win a conventional war with India, because India is so much bigger and because Lahore, for example, one of the most important places, is so close to the Indian border.

But it just seems to me—again, if you look at—if you ask yourself, where is there greater security? In Brazil, in Argentina, or even in South Africa, or even in South Korea, where they renounced nuclear weapons? Are those people less secure than the people of Pakistan and India? I think you would have to say they are not less secure.

So my argument is, any country can say to us, any country, particularly another democracy, "Oh, you're a hypocrite. You've got nuclear weapons. You don't want us to have any." Well, I'm trying to reduce the store of nuclear weapons the United States has, the store Russia has. The Russians have supported this. And we're trying to make the world more stable.

I just think—I don't think they're more secure by having nuclear weapons.

Cancellation of Visit to Joypura, Bangladesh

Mr. Jennings. On the subject of security, I'm really curious. You travel all the time in this extraordinarily tight security envelope. And yet, it wasn't secure enough yesterday to go to a small village in Bangladesh. Did you really feel a personal risk in Bangladesh? Did you end up telling Chelsea, or, if you talked to her, Mrs. Clinton, "I'm going off on a trip in which I am at personal risk"?

The President. Well, I think it's better for me not to discuss it, except to say this. Insofar as there was a risk, it had nothing to do with the Bangladeshis, nothing to do with the Government or the people of Bangladesh, and they were not in any way at fault. I did my best to take account of the analysis of our security people and to act accordingly, and it worked out just fine. We had a wonderful trip.

President's Security

Mr. Jennings. Do you ever have your way with the security people?

The President. Do you mean, do I ever disagree with them?

Mr. Jennings. No. Do you ever have your way?

The President. What do you mean?

Mr. Jennings. In other ways, do you ever have your—you can disagree with them; do you ever prevail?

The President. Sometimes I do. I have from time to time disagreed with them and actually done what I wanted to do. But when that happens, I try to do it the way they want to do it, because if I disagree with them, I realize I've assumed a greater risk, and I should do it in the way they want to do it.

Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Jennings. Last question, sir. You're going to see President Asad in Geneva on Sunday. That's a pretty big meeting. Does this mean a deal is close?

The President. I wouldn't say that. But I will say this. Ever since they met in Shepherdstown the first of the year, and then the talks sort of were stalled, I've been working very hard with both sides. I now think I'm in a position to have a sense of what it will take for both sides to get an agreement. So it's an appropriate time for me to discuss this with President Asad, in the hope that we can start the talks again.

I'm encouraged by the decisions that have been made by the Israelis and the Palestinians. I think they are committed to going forward, and they have a pretty good timetable. They're going to have to work hard to make it. And I think that the only way we'll ever have this thing the way it ought to be in the Middle East is to finish with the Syrians and then with the Lebanese, as well.

So I think this is time. Whether it will lead to a breakthrough, I don't know. I hope it will lead to a resumption of talks.

Mr. Jennings. Is it safe to assume that President Asad doesn't leave the country easily and would not agree to go to Geneva to see you were you not to have something pretty good to offer?

The President. I think it's safe to assume that I wouldn't waste his time, either. I think that we have—it's time for us to talk about what we think it would take to resume these talks and move to a resolution. And I'm going to give him my honest opinion about where we are and where I think we can go. And then we just need to make a decision, all of us, about whether to go forward. But principally, it's a decision for the Israelis and the Syrians.

Mr. Jennings. Does this involve a comprehensive settlement, one that involves the Syrian Golan Heights, the Israelis, and the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon?

The President. Well, I want to talk to President Asad. There isn't an agreement, yet. But if there is an agreement, I would hope it would lead to a resolution of both the Syrian issues and the Lebanese issues, which is very important in Israel. The Israelis care a lot about that, and well they should. And of course, the Lebanese do. We'll see. Keep your fingers crossed

Mr. Jennings. You're enthusiastic.

The President. I'm hopeful.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:20 p.m. at the Maurya Sheraton Hotel. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India; former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan; Gen. Pervez Musharraf, army chief of staff, who led a coup d'etat in Pakistan on October 12, 1999; and President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria. The transcript of this interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 22. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks to a Joint Session of Parliament in New Delhi
March 22, 2000

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, I am privileged to speak to you and, through you, to the people of India. I am honored to be joined today by members of my Cabinet and staff at the White House, and a very large representation of Members of our United States Congress from both political parties. We're all honored to be here, and we thank you for your warm welcome.

I would also like to thank the people of India for their kindness to my daughter and my mother-in-law and, on their previous trip, to my wife and my daughter.

I have looked forward to this day with great anticipation. This whole trip has meant a great deal to me, especially to this point, the opportunity I had to visit the Gandhi Memorial, to express on behalf of all the people of the United States our gratitude for the life, the work, the thought of Gandhi, without which the great civil rights revolution in the United States would never have succeeded on a peaceful plane.

As Prime Minister Vajpayee has said, India and America are natural allies, two nations conceived in liberty, each finding strength in its diversity, each seeing in the other a reflection of its own aspiration for a more humane and just world.

A poet once said the world's inhabitants can be divided into, and I quote, "those that have seen the Taj Mahal and those that have not." [*Laughter*] Well, in a few hours I will have a chance to cross over to the happier side of that divide. But I hope, in a larger sense, that my visit will help the American people to see the new India and to understand you better. And I hope that the visit will help India to understand America better and that by listening to each other we can build a true partnership of mutual respect and common endeavor.

From a distance, India often appears as a kaleidoscope of competing, perhaps superficial images. Is it atomic weapons or ahimsa; a land struggling against poverty and inequality or the world's largest middle-class society? Is it still simmering with communal tensions or history's most successful melting pot? Is it Bollywood or Satyajit Ray; Shweta Shetty or Alla Rakha? Is it the handloom or the hyperlink? The truth is, no single image can possibly do justice to your great nation. But beyond the complexities and the apparent contradictions, I believe India teaches us some very basic lessons.

The first is about democracy. There are still those who deny that democracy is a universal aspiration, who say it works only for people of a certain culture or a certain degree of economic development. India has been proving them wrong for 52 years now. Here is a country where more than 2 million people hold elected office in local government, a country that shows at every election that those who possess the least cherish their vote the most. Far from washing away the uniqueness of your culture, your democracy has brought out the richness of its tapestry and given you the knot that holds it together.

A second lesson India teaches is about diversity. You have already heard remarks about that this morning. But around the world there is a chorus of voices who say ethnic and religious diversity is a threat, who argue that the only way to keep different people from killing one another is to keep them as far apart as possible. But India has shown us a better way. For all the troubles you have seen, surely this subcontinent has seen more innocents hurt in the efforts to divide people by ethnicity and faith than by